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Complements to Walking



5. COMPLEMENTS TO WALKING

I. Transit Access

Good walking conditions for pedestrians are important inducements to using public transportation, since most public transit trips include a walk at one or both ends. Conversely, good public transportation, with buses and subways that run frequently and are reliable, is essential to achieving a walkable city.

Good public transportation is a requirement if we are to move away from dependence on the automobile.

A. What Exists: Subway, Buses, Paratransit



Red Line station.



Bus shelter in Central Square.

Cambridge is well served by fixed-rail transit. Most residents live within a half-mile walk of one of the five Red Line stops or the Lechmere Green Line station. There is one commuter rail connection to trains for the suburbs to the northwest. The Red Line is frequent, rapid, and reliable and the trains and stations are cheerful and reasonably clean. The city's Red Line stations are wheelchair accessible; the Lechmere station is not.

Twenty-nine MBTA bus routes also serve the city. Most are wheelchair accessible. For people whose disabilities prevent them from using regular T service, paratransit is available through The Ride, an MBTA program.

Most Red Line stations have elevators, but it is hard to carry bundles on the bus or on the Green Line. For people who have trouble with stairs, the buses are a problem. Buses do not always pull up to the curb, so passengers often have to step off the curb, then up several bus steps. While buses have kneelers (pistons that lower the bus's front end to reduce the height of the first step), this is an awkward way to move people and their packages and the kneelers aren't used very often.

The "Wave," the shuttle bus between the Kendall station and the Cambridge Galleria, has been very successful. In 1994 it carried 746,000 passengers.

Some Cambridge businesses and other institutions provide shuttle services to T stations and other services to encourage employees to use alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles for commuting. The City's Parking and Transportation Demand Management Planning Officer is available to help employers develop alternative transportation programs.

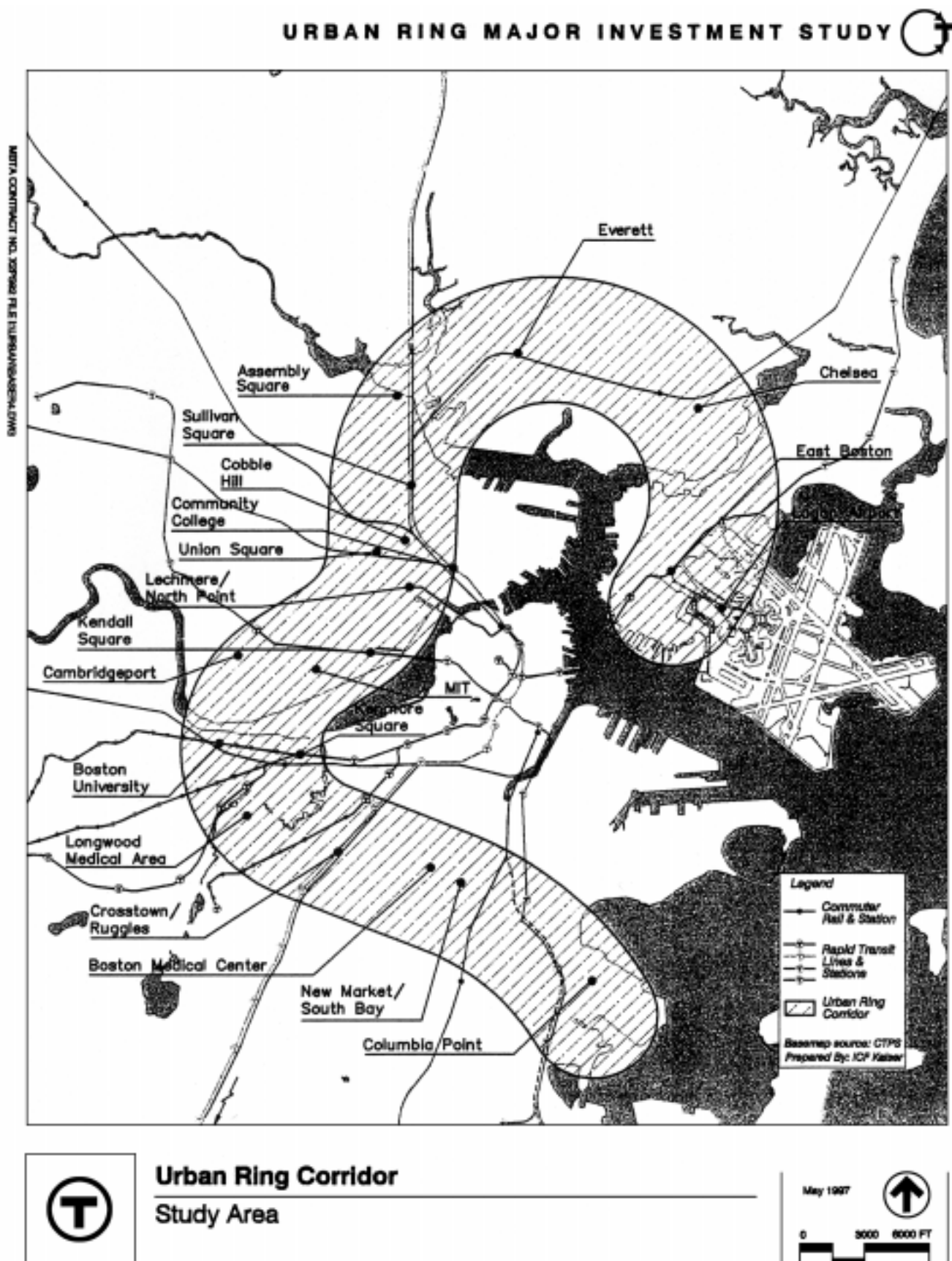
Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) group together several employers to provide shuttle services. They may also provide assistance with carpooling, information about public transportation, bicycle facilities, incentives for walking, etc.

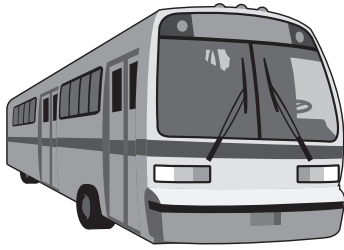
B. What Are the Gaps?

Fixed-rail Service Gaps

- Not all of the City's subway stations are easily accessible to pedestrians. The Porter Square station, for example, is surrounded by streets that are hard to cross (when plans to improve Porter Square for pedestrians are carried out, the station will be more accessible). Much of the area around the Alewife, Kendall, and Lechmere T stations is uninviting for walkers.
- The T is not available between roughly 12:30 AM and 5:00 AM.
- Lack of a circumferential route means Cambridge subway riders often have to go into Boston and out again to reach destinations, especially to and from places to the north and west. For example, it is necessary to take three trains and a shuttle bus to get to the airport from most of Cambridge, an awkward trip with luggage.

The Urban Ring is a major project that would make it possible to travel to many destinations in metropolitan Boston's urban core without having to go in to Park St. station and out again (see map below). The proposed new service would begin around Columbia Point in Boston, pass through Roxbury and the Longwood medical area, cross the Charles in Cambridgeport, connect with Kendall and Lechmere stations, pass through Somerville, Everett, and Chelsea, and end at Logan Airport. It would connect with all the existing subway lines. The exact alignment and mode—e.g., exclusive bus lane, light rail, heavy rail—of the new service are still being determined. The T began a major investment study in 1997 which included considerable community input. The communities through which the Urban Ring would run joined in a compact to work together to promote its construction. Funding for construction has not yet been identified, and this important addition to the transit system is unlikely to be completed much before 2020.





Gaps in bus service

- **Frequency:** Only six of the twenty-nine buses that serve Cambridge run every ten minutes or less during the rush hour. During the day, only seven run every twenty minutes or less off-peak. This means long waits, especially on return trips, which can't always be timed precisely. People who have other options rarely use buses that run infrequently.
- **Through routing:** Most bus routes do not traverse the entire city, so many trips within Cambridge require changing buses. Since most buses run infrequently, this can mean a lot of waiting (as well as an extra fare). Transfers are a major disincentive to taking buses.
- **Amenities:** Few bus stops have seating or shelter from wind or rain. The City is looking at ways to increase the number of bus shelters in Cambridge.
- **Information:** Signs designating bus stops can be hard to spot because they look like parking signs. The yellow "tombstone" signs used elsewhere by the MBTA are beginning to be used in Cambridge, which will help. A more serious problem is that at most bus stops there is no indication of which buses stop there, what their routes are, or how often they run. Even in the Harvard Square bus station the signs are inadequate.
- **In winter:** Bus stops are not routinely shoveled out or salted. This is legally the responsibility of the abutter.
- **Bus design issues:** The diesel buses currently in use should be replaced by alternative fuel vehicles, to reduce air pollution and noise. Bus and bus stop design that make getting on and off easier and faster should be seriously considered. For bus routes that have relatively few passengers and/or include narrow streets with tight turns, smaller buses should be considered.

II. Delivery Services

Ingenuity will be required to make it easier for people to carry things without using cars. Getting purchases, especially groceries, home can be a major chore for people on foot. For people without washing machines, transporting clothes to and from Laundromats can be difficult.

To help pedestrian in situations like these, the following actions would be helpful:

- Incentives for stores to provide more delivery services and less parking
- Encouragement to stores that offer parking validations at garages to offer a free T validation or tokens as well
- Encouragement of grocery delivery services

III. Taxi Escort Services

Taxis are an important backup service for pedestrians, especially for those who do not own cars. Taxis can help make the city safer. In Great Britain at night, taxi drivers wait until passengers are inside their doors at their destination before driving off.

The City will work with taxi services to explore ways they can optimize the value of their services in creating a safer city, including provision of accessible services for people with disabilities.